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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000290

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USAID/AFR/WA WAY, AFR/SD DATWOOD  
STATE PASS TO USTR-AGAMA  
NSC FOR MICHELLE GAVIN AND KAREN O'DONNELL  
DOC FOR 3317/ITA/OA/KBURRESS AND 3130/USFC/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS  
TREASURY FOR PETERS AND IERONIMO  
COMUSNAVEUR FOR ANAGGIAR

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: HARNESSING BIO-DIVERSITY FOR MEDICINE IN  
EDO STATE

**¶1.** (U) Summary: On June 19, PolOff visited the Pax Herbal Clinic and Research Laboratories at Ewu in Edo State, where Benedictine monks have been developing herbal medicines based on indigenous bio-resources. Pax Herbal combines indigenous knowledge and resources with modern diagnostic and laboratory testing to develop and produce herbal medicines, 21 of which have to date been approved by the Nigerian Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). Pax Herbal employs over 200 people in its operations that stretch from the planting and harvesting of selected plants to the packaging and distribution of finished products. Three laboratories are manned by scientists with advanced degrees in microbiology, chemistry, and botany as well as lab technicians and a Registered Nurse. The clinic, laboratories, factory plant and equipment are maintained to a very high standard of repair and cleanliness. While Pax Herbal is a model of how good management can produce high quality facilities and products even in a rural Nigerian context, the products developed represent only the tip of the iceberg with respect to the economic potential of the systematic and scientific exploitation of the bio-diversity indigenous to the region for pharmaceutical purposes. End Summary.

#### Demystifying Traditional Medicine

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**¶2.** (U) On June 19, PolOff visited the Benedictine Monastery at Ewu in Edo State established 30 years ago by Irish monks and for the past 12 years the home of Pax Herbal, a non-profit company specialized in the production of medicine based on indigenous bio-resources. The monastery's interest in producing medicine sprang from the realization that many of the inhabitants of the surrounding communities suffered from curable ailments but were unable to access or afford modern medicine. According to Father Anselm Adodo, the founder of Pax Herbal, an estimated 85% of all Africans today still rely on traditional medicine, not from choice but because they have no alternative. The monks wanted to demystify traditional African medicine and promote its rational use through research, documentation and information technology. They started investigating ways to produce affordable medicines based on indigenous products, by applying scientific knowledge and analysis to the traditional

medicines which were native to the region. In Pax Herbal's research laboratory, scientists analyze the chemical content of indigenous substances used in traditional medicine, identify active ingredients, separate out potentially harmful substances and formulate herbal-based medicines. Pax Herbal produces affordable medicines that have been clinically tested, approved by NAFDAC, and meet high quality control standards, 21 of which have so far been approved by NAFDAC. PaxHerbal has focused research efforts on illnesses common to the surrounding communities, namely malaria, diabetes and HIV/Aids, but also have products to address food poisoning and indigestion, coughs and nasal congestion, typhoid fever and sickle cell anemia. (Note: to date none of their products have been approved for the treatment of HIV/Aids. End Note.)

Model Factory, Model Clinic

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¶3. (U) Today, Pax Herbal employs roughly 230 people in all phases of production from planting to distribution. There are three laboratories (research/drug formulation, quality control, and diagnostic) with six scientific personnel holding advanced degrees in industrial chemistry, microbiology or botany. The monastery has roughly ten hectars of farmland for the production of raw materials, but also purchases raw materials from local farmers. A factory in which raw materials are processed (dried, crushed, and distilled), the medicines produced, packaged, labeled, tested and loaded for delivery is located directly behind the clinic. Pax Herbal has a distribution network that stretches

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across southern Nigeria through certified partners, mostly Catholic Churches. The physical plant, designed by the monks, is well lit, well maintained and exceptionally clean. Father Anselm pointed out that several of the simpler machines in use (the drying machine, conveyer belts etc.) had been built by the employees in house. All machines, whether self-made or purchased, are in an excellent state of repair with constant, preventative maintenance in evidence.

¶4. (U) In addition, there is a clinic with a Registered Nurse and trained medical consultants who see patients daily. The clinic has tile floors throughout in contrast to state-run health facilities which, according to the Edo State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Moses Momoh, use non-hygienic concrete floors. Likewise more advanced than state health facilities are the electronic patient registration system and the electronic medical records data base at the Pax Herbal clinic. The clinic also offers patients a fitness room and an internet cafe with six terminals which could be used free-of-charge.

¶5. (U) Comment: Pax Herbal is a model example of how good management can produce high quality products and facilities even in rural Nigeria. Yet the products developed to date represent only the tip of the iceberg with respect to the economic potential of indigenous bio-resources for pharmaceutical purposes. The monks at Pax Herbal have focused exclusively on those raw materials already used in traditional medicine, however, the bio-diversity of the African forest may offer a vast array of hitherto untapped ingredients useful in pharmaceuticals. The systematic and scientific analysis of these resources could be immensely profitable to firms dedicated to early stage pharmaceutical development (biotech venture capital). As an added benefit, by identifying the economic value of various species, conservation of the bio-diversity of the native forests would be encouraged. End Comment.

¶6. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.  
BLAIR